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American Military's Discomfort with Peace Operations

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The contents of the paper reflect my personal views and are not necessarily
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Abstract

American Military's Discomfort with Peace Operations

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Peace operations are a growing market for the employment of military forces around the world. The increasing number of peace operations, however, has not been accompanied by a commensurate increase in America's comfort level with these operations.

As the sole remaining global super power the American military can expect to participate in a significant number of UN sanctioned peace operations. Considering this forecast it is imperative that the U.S. military come to grips with the discomfort it has with peace operations.

This paper is intended as a step in that direction. UN mandates and joint doctrine are highlighting to provide new insight and prompt additional thought. With a greater level of understanding we can further the development of joint doctrine and become better prepared for the missions derived from UN mandates.

American Military's Discomfort with Peace Operations

Introduction

Since 1948 there have been a total of forty-nine United Nations (UN) peacekeeping operations. Of this number thirty-six were created between 1988 and September 1998. These numbers do not include multinational peace enforcement operations like the Gulf war, Somalia, Rwanda, Haiti, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania. At the time of this writing, seventeen UN peacekeeping operations are currently under way.¹ Additionally America is on the verge of sending a peacekeeping force to Kosovo.

These statistics clearly indicate that peace operations are a growing market for the employment of U.S. forces. They also suggest a close relationship between the U.S. military and peace operations. Given this familiarity it would be reasonable to assume that the U.S. military is comfortable with these types of operations. I would argue that the opposite is true.

The increase in the number of peace operations over the last few years has not been accompanied by a commensurate increase in America's comfort level. Rather, frustration and general displeasure is common among those tasked with performing peace operations.

This frustration was expressed by a UN commander enroute to a peacekeeping operation when he said; "None of the political leadership can tell me what they want me to accomplish. That fact, however, does not stop them

from continually asking me when I will be done.²" This sentiment is not an isolated case. Many officers express strong, negative views on peace operations³. In general, I think it is fair to say that the American military is clearly uncomfortable with peace operations.

Failures during operations in Lebanon and Somalia certainly add to the general misgivings identified with peace operations, but I don't believe they are the cause. Rather, the American military's discomfort with peace operations can be linked to United Nations mandates and American joint doctrine.

Purpose and Methodology

Given the United States' role as world leader and the growth of peace operations, the U.S. military should fully expect continued involvement in future peace operations. Considering this forecast it is imperative that the U.S. military come to grips with the discomfort it has with peace operations.

This paper is intended as a step toward understanding the environment in which peace operations exist. With the insight provided we may be able to further the development of joint doctrine and be better prepared for the missions derived from UN mandates. In this effort I will consider the ambiguous nature of UN mandates and a joint doctrine that artificially delineates military operations.

United Nations Mandates

“Fuzzy definitions can be useful for shorthand communication, but they can also contribute to fuzzy thinking.”⁴

Since all military missions begin with some form of directive it follows that this paper should begin by considering the source of many mandates. Joint Pub 3-0 identifies the UN as the most frequent sponsor of traditional peacekeeping activities⁵. The numbers detailed in the introduction clearly bear this out. As shall become evident, the UN is not only a significant source of peace operation mandates, it is also catalyst for the American military's discomfort with these same missions.

An in-depth look at the authority, processes, and procedures governing the United Nations is beyond the scope and operational context of this paper. However, critical thought on “Operations” must extend beyond the boundaries of the operational level to fully consider the environment in which it operates. To this end the following discussion is provided to shed some light on the ambiguity inherent in UN doctrine (or lack of doctrine) as it pertains to the sanctioning of UN peace operations.

The mission of a UN authorized, or directed, peace operation is derived from a mandate or resolution issued by the United Nations Security Council. The authority to issue such mandates stems from UN Charter, Chapters VI, VII, and VIII. Chapter VI is entitled “Pacific Settlement of Disputes.” Chapter VII deals with “Actions with Respect to Threats to the Peace, Breaches of the

Peace, and Acts of Aggression" and authorizes the use of force to counter the aggression. Chapter VIII is "Regional Arrangements" and refers to the settlement of local disputes through regional arrangements or agencies⁶.

A curious aspect of the UN Charter, to include the aforementioned Chapters, is that the terms "peace keeping" and "peace enforcement" do not appear in the text. Furthermore, there is no general agreement within the UN on the defining characteristics of either term⁷. This lack of specificity within the Charter, and lack of consensus among UN members, stems from the fact that peace operations were not anticipated by the authors of the original Charter.

Practice and doctrine simply evolved over time as the UN found itself faced with the need to act in the interest of world peace⁸. The "doctrine" that emerged through practice "was less peaceful than was envisioned in Chapter VI and less forceful than the doctrine that was contemplated in Chapter VII of the Charter."⁹ In fact, it has been suggested that the traditional role of peacekeeping simply evolved to fill a gap left in the Charter. That is, a gap between peaceful resolution of disputes and collective enforcement measures.¹⁰ Perhaps the late Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold put it best when he observed that traditional peacekeeping operation were actually being authorized under a nonexistent Chapter "six and one-half" of the UN Charter¹¹.

The point to be made here is that vague rules are applied to the development of UN mandates for peace operations. Furthermore, the lack of UN doctrine tends to blur the difference between peacekeeping and peace enforcement actions. As a result, "peacekeeping" is routinely used as a generic

term to describe a wide range of peace operations. This only serves to inject ambiguity into UN mandates and frustrate the military commander searching for specificity.

As a case in point, the UN's failure to provide sufficient clarity in mandates was evidenced during peace operations in Somalia. In the after action review process it was noted that "Clear UN mandates are critical to the planning of the mission because they shape the basic political guidance given to U.S. forces by our national Command Authorities (NCA). A clear mandate shapes not only the mission (the what) that we perform but the way we carry it out (the how)."¹²

A second point to consider regarding UN mandates has to do with the political nature of the United Nations. As a political entity, we must bear in mind the effect politics has on the final product (i.e. mandates and resolutions). To gain UN Security Council (UNSC) approval a mandate must receive concurring votes from nine of the fifteen members, including affirmative votes from the five Permanent Members.¹³ In a perfect world UNSC resolutions and/or mandates would be explicit mechanisms to direct the operational commander to a clear mission statement. The political reality, however, is that mandates and/or resolutions normally emerge from the Security Council as water downed versions of their former selves. This results from the political necessity of gaining consensus among the "big-five" Security Council members and at least four additional voting members of the UNSC¹⁴. In other words, specificity is lost

so that the final product (the mandate) is acceptable to a wider range of UNSC members.

The political nature of the UNSC and the lack of UN doctrine on peace operations creates an ambiguity that is at odds with the military desire for specificity. In this light it is not hard to see the UN is a catalyst for the American military's discomfort with Operations Other Than War.

Joint Doctrine

"The key to wisdom is calling things by their correct names" Confucius

Joint doctrine is a compilation of institutional knowledge that governs the employment of U.S. military forces. It provides fundamental principles and a common perspective from which to plan and execute joint operations¹⁵. The overarching concept behind doctrine is the ability to define and clarify those activities expected of the military. Unfortunately, joint doctrine does not provide clarity to peace operations. In fact, I would argue that current doctrine actually confuses the issue and contributes to the American military's discomfort with peace operations.

The confusing nature of joint doctrine for peace operations can be traced to three causes. First there is the doctrinal separation of operations that possess common characteristics. For example, war and operations other than

war are doctrinally segregated and given their own set of principles. This is done even though "combat" is a characteristic of both.

Second, joint doctrine groups operations that are clearly distinct. This is born out by the association of peacekeeping with peace enforcement under the general category of peace operations¹⁶. This is erroneous in that "Peace Operation Variables" can not be logically applied to peace enforcement.

The third cause of confusion pertains to mission considerations that mistakenly distinguish peace operations from war. In combination these three issues create an academic (or theoretical) distinction between war and peace operations that is not justified. As a result, the practical application of doctrine can become a frustrating enterprise.

Doctrinal Separation of Operations with Similar Characteristics:

Joint Pub 3-0 indicates that the range of military operations extends from war to operations other than war. A distinct line is drawn between the two categories. Combat, however, is depicted as a continuum that encompasses war and extends into the realm of operations other than war¹⁷. This line between war and operations other than war creates two entirely different entities with separate doctrinal concepts. The delineation in concept and doctrine, however, ignores the fact that combat is common to both war and peace operations. In essence joint doctrine has excluded peace operations from essential doctrinal concepts dealing with combat.

Specifically, joint doctrine has established separate principles for war and operations other than war. This is at odds with the fact that combat is a

characteristic of both war and peace operations. The definition of peace enforcement prescribes the use of force to compel compliance with resolutions or sanctions¹⁸. Since purely defensive operations are not conducive to compelling an opposing force, it can be inferred that the application of military force during peace enforcement operations may include an "offensive". At a minimum, the commander may want to consider principles such as mass, economy of force, maneuver, and/or simplicity when planning a peace enforcement operation. These principles, however, are reserved for war¹⁹. If the peace enforcement commander adheres to doctrine for operations other than war he is limited to the principles of objective, unity of effort, security, restraint, perseverance, and legitimacy.²⁰

Erroneous Doctrinal Associations: Peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations are doctrinally grouped under "Peace Operations," but they are clearly different activities. There are two critical distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations. First, peacekeeping assumes consent among all belligerents involved in the dispute. Peacekeeping forces are designed to enter a permissive environment as a neutral party and monitor compliance with the peace accords agreed to by the belligerents²¹. Peace enforcement operations, however, do not require the consent of the opposing forces. The second distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement is the use of force. The definition of peace enforcement specifically prescribes the use of force to achieve the desired end state²². Peacekeeping on the other hand authorizes the use of force for self defense only.

Even with these differences established by definition, joint doctrine applies a set of variables to peace operations that can not be logically applied to peace enforcement. These "critical variables" of peace operations are; the level of consent, the level of force, and the degree of impartiality.²³

Under the joint definition of peace enforcement, consent does not exist among all belligerents, nor is it required to initiate the operation. If there were unanimous consent there would be no need engage in a peace enforcement operation. Rather, the conditions would warrant a peacekeeping force. The same holds true with regard to impartiality. A military force can not exhibit impartiality when it employs force to compel a belligerent to abide by a peace accord. Therefore it makes little sense to apply these "critical variables" to the whole of peace operations when peace enforcement is not characterized by consent or impartiality.

Mission Considerations: Concepts set forth in joint doctrine further reinforce the mistaken notion that war and peace operations are more dissimilar than they really are. The Joint Task Force Commander's Handbook for Peace Operations indicates that the ultimate measure of success in peace operations is settlement and not victory. And, although settlement is rarely achievable through military efforts alone, peace operations are designed to create the conditions in which diplomacy may proceed.²⁴

The problem with this concept is that it does not apply exclusively to peace operations; The concept also applies to war. Carl Von Clausewitz expressed this very idea more than 150 years ago when he wrote, "...the

ultimate outcome of war is not always to be regarded as final...a remedy may still be found in political conditions at some later date."²⁵ Clausewitz's point is that war is never final and that the military can only set the conditions for peace. The politicians must create the final, lasting peace.

Joint doctrine also argues that the concept of traditional military victory or defeat is inappropriate in peace operations²⁶. This is an applicable consideration for peacekeeping because the primary measure of effectiveness is based on compliance with peace accords. Therefore, the peacekeeping commander should not look for a traditional military victory.

In peace enforcement operations, however, the measure of military effectiveness is based on the success or failure to forcibly compel a belligerent to do our will. To clarify this point it is helpful to think of peace enforcement operations as wars for limited aims. In both peace enforcement and limited wars the intent is not necessarily to destroy an opposing force or conquer a nation. Rather, military force is applied to compel the enemy to accept specific diplomatic conditions. In this regard the concept of traditional military victory or defeat is quite appropriate for peace enforcement operations.

To summarize the connection between doctrine and the American military's discomfort with peace operations I once again borrow from Clausewitz. In an emphatic warning to the politician and military commander Clausewitz states; "The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of

war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, **nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature.** (emphasis added).²⁷

I believe that the doctrinal delineation between war and peace operations has portrayed peace operations as something that is alien to its nature. And in the process, the stage has been set for confused thinking and application. General Sullivan succinctly expressed this sentiment when he wrote, "Categorizing war as separate from all other uses of military force may mislead the strategist, causing him to believe the conditions required for success in the employment of military force when one is conducting war differ from use of military force in operations other than war."²⁸

Recommendations

To this point I have argued the case that UN mandates and doctrine are sources for the American military's troublesome relationship with peace operations. It was not my intention to portray current joint doctrine as a worthless collection of publications. On the contrary I believe joint doctrine has made significant inroads toward the development of sound doctrine for peace operations. This is particularly impressive given the relatively short time span involved since work began. Doctrine for operations other than war was not dealt with in a comprehensive manner in any service until June of 1993 when the Army published its latest version of Field Manual 100-5, Operations.²⁹

Since 1993 the issues pertaining to peace operations have received significant thought and attention. The series of Joint Pubs referenced in this paper are a testament to that fact. To that body of knowledge I hope to add the following thoughts and recommendations in an effort to 1) further the development of joint doctrine and 2) help prepare the U.S. military for the missions derived from UN mandates.

UN Mandates: The political nature of the UN and the lack of UN doctrine on peace operations creates an environment that lends itself to the development of ambiguous mandates. Given the military requirement for specificity there is clearly a need for the UN to adopt a concise doctrine with regard to peace operations. The first step toward this goal is the insertion of a solid line between traditional peacekeeping operations (observe and report) and enforcement actions (use of force to compel)³⁰. This action should go a long way in removing the ambiguity expressed by the term "Chapter Six and one half."

Even with a concise UN doctrine the political nature of the UN Security Council will continue to adversely affect the specificity of mandates. Fortunately, existing joint doctrine recognizes these politically murky waters and offers the operational commander sound advice. The joint commander must be prepared for the ambiguous nature of the mandates, seek clarification, develop his plans, and submit them for approval³¹. Specificity will only be assured once his restated mission and plans are approved.

Doctrine: The main point of my discussion on joint doctrine boils down to the erroneous segregation of war and peace operations. This leads to the

portrayal of peace operations (specifically peace enforcement) as something that is alien to its true nature. It should now be evident that peace enforcement and peacekeeping are significantly different operations. Therefore, they should not be grouped together under the category of peace operations and linked to the same variables.

In a more general sense, any operation that includes the potential for combat should not be doctrinally segregated from war. Peace enforcement, as an example, clearly includes warfighting tasks and requires the same essential doctrinal concepts that are applied to war.

The solution to this issue may be forthcoming in the next generation of doctrine. The U.S. Army is working on a revised edition of FM 100-5 which eliminates the distinction between war and operations other than war. The intent is to merge the principles of war with the principles of operations other than war. The product will be a single set of comprehensive "principles of Operations"³².

Given the lead role Army doctrine plays in the formulation of joint doctrine, it is likely that any advancement in the new FM 100-5 will soon be followed by a similar change to joint doctrine. If this can be accomplished, joint doctrine will make significant progress towards eliminating the military's discomfort with peace operations.

Conclusion

The statistics enumerated at the beginning of this paper clearly indicate that peace operations are a growing market for the employment of military forces. As the sole remaining global super power the American military can expect to participate in a significant number of these UN sanctioned peace operations.

To improve the chances for success in these operations, the U.S. military must come to grips with the apparent discomfort it has with peace operations. In this effort the military must thoroughly investigate the environment of peace operations and identify the root causes of the issue.

This paper is intended as a step in that direction. By highlighting the issues associated with UN mandates and joint doctrine I hope to prompt additional thought and insight. With a greater level of understanding we can further the development of joint doctrine and become better prepared for the missions derived from UN mandates.

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- ¹ United Nations Internet Home Page (UN.ORG)
- ² Kenneth Allard, SOMALIA OPERATIONS: LESSONS LEARNED Ft. McNair, Washington, D.C.: (National Defense University Press, 1995), 21
- ³ Informal survey of NWC, CNC&S students - Personal perceptions of Peace Operations.
- ⁴ Myron H. Nordquist, "What Color Helmet? Reforming Security Council Peacekeeping Mandates," The Newport Papers 12 (August 1997). Introduction
- ⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, Joint Publication 3-0 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1 February 1995), V-11
- ⁶ Joint Warfighting Center, Joint Task Force Commander's Handbook for Peace Operations, (Fort Monroe, VA: Joint Warfighting Center, 16 June 1997) I-1 -- I-3
- ⁷ Nordquist, 15
- ⁸ Ibid., 7-8
- ⁹ Ibid., 8
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 2
- ¹¹ Ibid., 8
- ¹² Allard, 22
- ¹³ Nordquist, 1
- ¹⁴ Conversation with Professor Dillon, NWC, JMO Department
- ¹⁵ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, i
- ¹⁶ Ibid., III-12
- ¹⁷ Ibid., I-2
- ¹⁸ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War, Joint Publication 3-07 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 16 June 1995), III-13
- ¹⁹ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Doctrine for Joint Operations, A-1
- ²⁰ Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Doctrine for Military Operations Other Than War, II-1
- ²¹ Ibid., III-12
- ²² Ibid., III-13
- ²³ Joint Warfighting Center, Joint Task Force Commander's Handbook for Peace Operations, I-12
- ²⁴ Ibid., I-7
- ²⁵ Carl von Clausewitz, On War, ed. and trans. by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), 80.
- ²⁶ Joint Warfighting Center, Joint Task Force Commander's Handbook for Peace Operations, I-8
- ²⁷ Clausewitz, 88
- ²⁸ Gordon R. Sullivan, "Land Warfare in the 21st Century," Military Review 9 (September 1993): 20
- ²⁹ Department of the Army, Operations, Field Manual 100-5 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Army, 14 June 1993), 13-0 - 13-8
- ³⁰ Nordquist, 17
- ³¹ Joint Warfighting Center, Joint Task Force Commander's Handbook for Peace Operations, I-6
- ³² U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command, In-Progress Review Brief to the Army Chief of Staff.

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